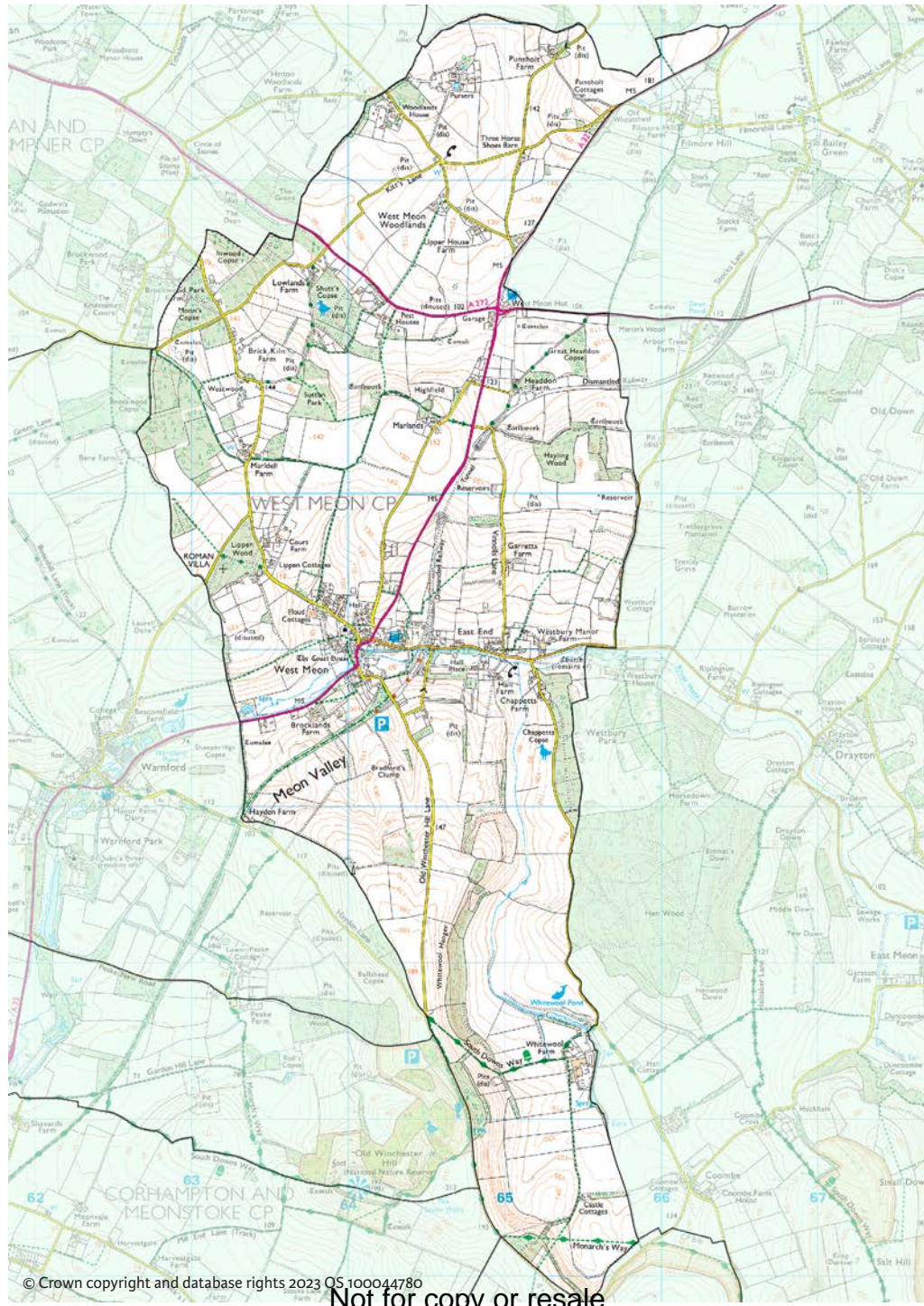




WEST MEON VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

Design guidance for the parish

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Foreword

Our Parish Design Statement should have the landscape at its heart

In any community, change is brought about not only by new buildings, but also by smaller alterations to homes, gardens, roads, and open spaces, which can significantly affect the character and appearance of a Parish. A Parish Design Statement identifies the characteristics that establish local identity and sense of place. It gives those considering development in West Meon the information needed to ensure proposals are in harmony with the style, scale and setting of the parish. It will be as valuable to individual householders – wishing to build extensions or replace windows – as it will be in guiding planners, architects, and engineers when they consider new buildings, highway projects and other forms of development.

The special qualities that make up the character and appearance of our parish also contribute towards the area's sense of place and the natural beauty of the South Downs National Park. A landscape-led approach to the Parish Design Statement ensures that landscape character and quality become material considerations when determining planning applications in West Meon.

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WHAT IS A VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (VDS)?

In any community, change is brought about not only by new buildings, but also by smaller alterations and additions to homes and gardens, open spaces, paths, street furniture, walls and hedges which can affect the look and feel of a whole village and the wider landscape.

A Village Design Statement provides a source of ideas for designers wishing to encompass local building styles and themes and to reflect, not only on the traditions within West Meon, but to inspire new trends that are complimentary and bold and look to the future whilst acknowledging the past. The Village Design Statement also references the Conservation Area in the heart of the village.

A Village Design Statement is not about whether development should take place or not. The policies for this are set out within the South Downs Local Plan 2019.¹ The first West Meon VDS was formally adopted by Winchester City Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in October 2002.

Since 2011 West Meon has been within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) which is now the planning authority for the parish. It is intended that the SDNP Authority will adopt the West Meon Village Design Statement as a Supplementary Planning Document.

In producing this new Village Design Statement, all previous design guidelines have been revisited and, where necessary, refreshed. When taken together with the supporting text and appendices, this Design Statement sets out details of local characteristics and special qualities which provide local distinctiveness and help to make the village such a unique place.

It is unfortunate, but often common place for residents to hear about proposals for development once the design or consultation period is finished. Although the parish council is asked by the Planning Authority for views on planning applications, it may not get the opportunity to offer as much positive input as it would like – particularly on matters relating to the design of new

¹ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/south-downs-local-plan/>

development. However, once a Village Design Statement has been adopted it will provide advice and information for applicants, so they are aware of the design standards required for any development within our village.

WHAT DOES IT COVER?

THE VILLAGE AND ITS SETTING

Design Guidelines

THE LANDSCAPE

Design Guidelines

TREES, ROUTES AND OPEN SPACES

Design Guidelines

BUILDING FORM, MATERIALS AND DESIGN

Design Guidelines

WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

The aim of the Village Design Statement (VDS) is to ensure that any future development and change in the village is based on an understanding of the area's past and the village today. Through an evidence-based assessment, it draws attention to what is special about the buildings, open spaces and the landscape setting of West Meon. It gives the community a say in the future of our village, by producing guidance on how to respect the special qualities.

Local character could easily be threatened by unsympathetic development and West Meon Parish Council will use this VDS to inform its responses to planning applications.

It is intended to be referred to and adhered to by planners, architects, landowners, and developers to give them some indication as to what would be acceptable in the village. It is also intended to provide guidance for residents and business owners wishing to build extensions or otherwise alter their properties and/or land.

Some measure of change is inevitable, but it is essential that this does not compromise the unique characteristics of this historic village.

WHAT AREA DOES IT COVER?

The West Meon VDS directly covers the village and its immediate surroundings, as shown in the boundary map. However, the principles and guidelines may be applicable elsewhere in the parish, for example the areas of Lippen, Woodlands and Whitewool.

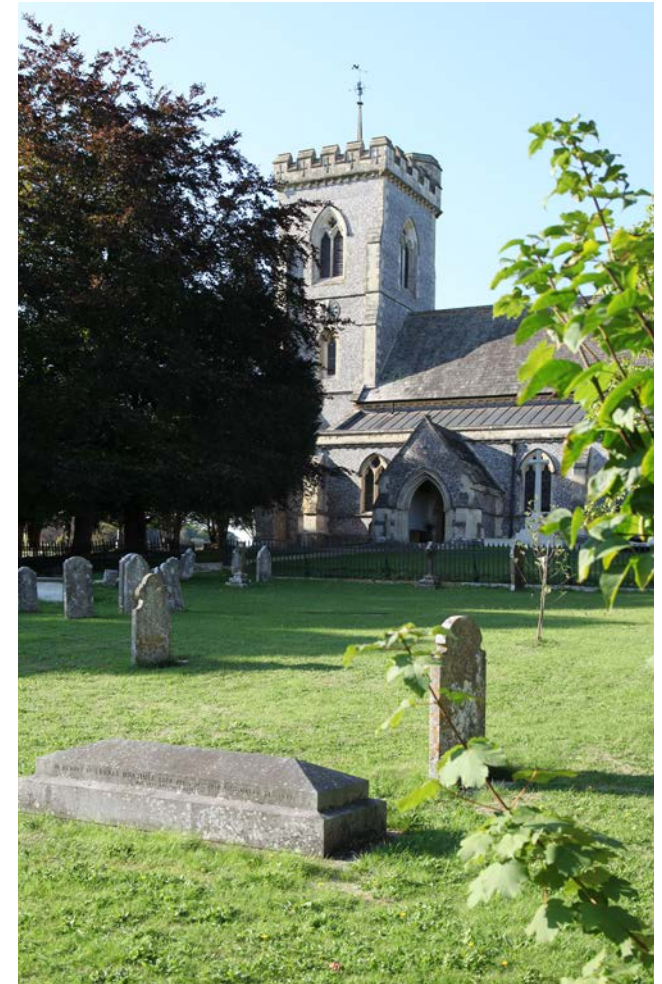
WHO PRODUCED THE WEST MEON VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT?

West Meon Parish Council has taken the lead in writing the new VDS with the support of parishioners and South Downs National Park Authority. It is the result of public consultation involving the whole parish at all stages including:

- a number of public meetings, workshops and exhibitions,
- a questionnaire distributed to every household,
- opportunities for parishioners to comment on the drafts,

- it draws on the detailed findings of a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment review.

Further information of the consultation is in **Appendix A**



The Church of St. John the Evangelist

THE HISTORY OF WEST MEON

The name West Meon and its origin is difficult to determine.

There are three possibilities:

- The valley was named after an ancient British tribe, the Meonwara.
- The word Meon was introduced by one of the tribes of Wessex
- The Jutes, settling in the area around 661, gave the name to the river and several villages they inhabited. In the Domesday Book, West Meon is called Menes.

The Hampshire Ridgeway, a stretch of one of the great highways of the Stone Age, forms part of the parish boundary of West Meon. Ancient tracks and roads like the Harrow Way, established by the first inhabitants of the area, run down to crossing points on the river which flows through the village. Tools dating from the Middle Stone Age and Bronze Age to the present day have been found in the gardens and fields of West Meon, and Bronze Age leaders lie buried in barrows on the village outskirts. During excavations in 2010 a Bronze Age settlement ring and ditch was unearthed together with 46 Saxon graves.

The discovery in Lippen Wood of the remains of a relatively small but luxurious villa with beautiful mosaics, suggests that life in this picturesque and verdant valley was very pleasant in the settled and prosperous middle period of the Roman occupation.

In 932, King Athelstan granted 12 hides of land in this area to his theign Athelgard, and our parish boundaries still follow those laid out in this charter. Reputedly the last Saxons to be converted to Christianity were the Meonwara. This conversion took place where the Cross now stands at the site of an earlier cross.

Much as today, farming and farmers of differing degrees have played an important part in the life of the village. Originally, only the valley floor was cultivated, the flood plain providing a narrow area very suitable for farming. For many years the property of the Bishop of Winchester, West Meon has featured on occasions in the politics and conflicts of our

nation. During the Civil War, the village was held by both sides at different times; horses were stabled in the church and the original cross in the centre of the village was destroyed, possibly by Cromwell's troops.

The Church of St. John the Evangelist was designed by George Gilbert Scott and completed in 1846. It is architecturally notable for being one of the first to be influenced by the ideals of the Cambridge Camden Society. This society was instrumental in introducing a convincing Gothic style, purporting to be transitional between early English and Decorated (belonging to the latter half of the 13th century). The squared flint work is rare



The water meadows and flood plain

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in church building and the individual flints were 'knapped' by the women of the village at a piece of land now known as Knapps Hard, located just to the north of the church. The school and schoolhouse were built of the same materials a few years later.

In the churchyard is the tomb of Thomas Lord, founder of Lords Cricket Ground, which is still maintained by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC). During the 18th and 19th centuries, West Meon lay on the coaching routes from London to Southampton and Gosport. The White Lion, is today Walnut House (previously Wolverton), and was one of three inns in the parish where a coach could pick up a heavy (cock) horse to help them up the steep hills into and out of the village.

In the centre of the village at the junction is The Cross on ground given to West Meon Parish Council "for the use of the parishioners for ever by the lord of the manor, Henry Johnson in 1898". On the spot where an earlier cross stood it is in memory of George Vinning Rogers, who was village doctor for 40 years, and his wife Mary Anne Rogers. It was erected in 1901 by the last of their sixteen children.

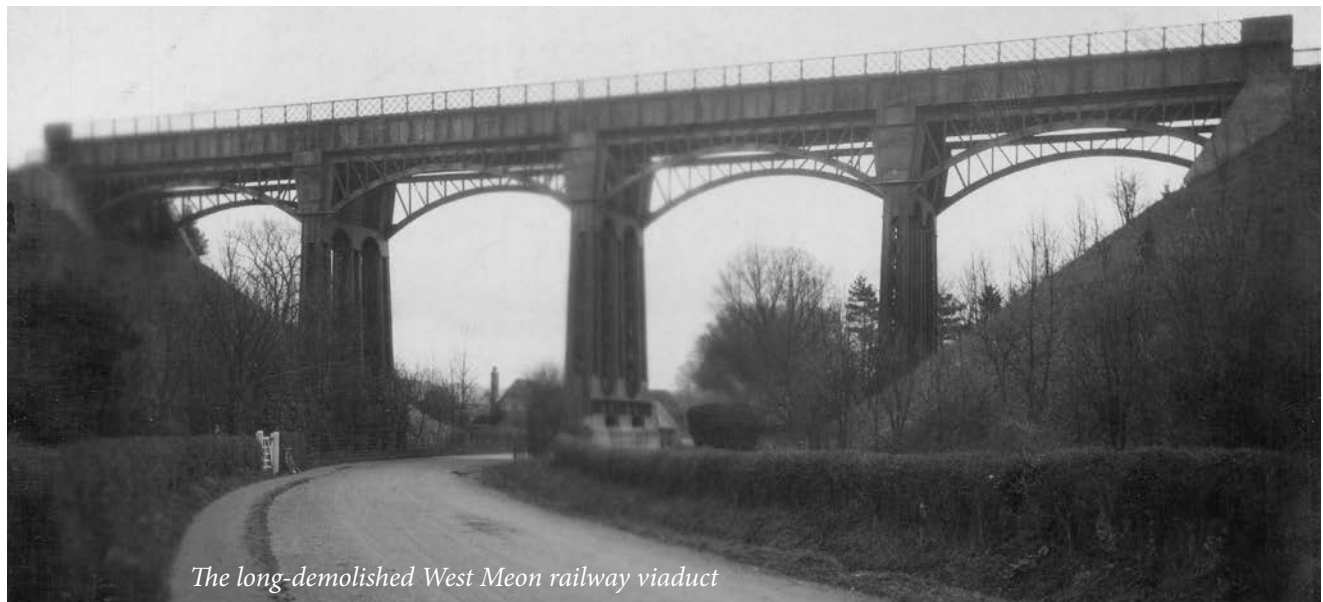
The 19th century was a period of mixed fortunes. Early on, poor harvests, combined with declining prices, caused unemployment, hardship and local unrest. The middle of the century saw the demolition of the original Saxon church and the building of its replacement. Mary Touchet, a local philanthropist, had a house built in 1827 which became the rectory in 1830 and is now West Meon House. She also funded

the village school, built in 1852. The Touchet Trust that she established for the benefit of the young people of the parish is still in existence today, providing grants for educational purposes.

At the turn of the 20th century, the construction of the railway brought considerable change. A large embankment was built to carry the line over the river, which altered the land profile and diverted the course of the river. The Meon Valley line was built by the London & South Western railway to form part of a new route from Waterloo via Alton to Gosport, Portsmouth and on to Southampton. The route opened in 1903 and while popular for local travel never reached success over long distance destinations. The service survived until the 1950's but people travelled less and less on the line and it closed in 1955.

The Great War 1914-18 left its mark on West Meon. Some thirty men of the parish were killed in the War. The Second World War 1939-45 took nine lives.

The latter part of the 20th century saw further changes, particularly in agriculture. One result has been the conversion of redundant farm buildings for use as housing and for light industry. However, as work opportunities changed and many parishioners found employment beyond the immediate area, the impact on the local shops became critical. Until the middle of the twentieth century there was a doctor, seven grocers, a newsagent, a butcher, a saddler, a tailor, a post office and drapers, two garages, five pubs, the church, the school, a bank and a blacksmith.



The long-demolished West Meon railway viaduct

WEST MEON TODAY

The A32 continues to dominate the village centre. In response to concerns, in 2007 the parish council along with Hampshire Highways and Winchester City Council implemented traffic calming measures, which included new landscaping in the village centre.

In 2011 West Meon became part of the newly formed South Downs National Park (SDNP). West Meon became a more prominent tourist hub and destination. The old West Meon station and the track bed from West Meon to Wickham were taken in hand by Hampshire Countryside Services to create the Meon Valley Trail: a car free route for horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians. In 2016-17 the station and track bed areas were improved as the South Downs National Park increased visitor numbers to the area. The former goods yard became the *Nature Station*, a school wildlife resource. Overnight accommodation for tourist numbers increased with new camping, glamping and pod provision adding to the existing bed and breakfast provision. The parish council published Walks around West Meon in 2014 and in the same year created the West Meon Poppy Trail to commemorate the lives of the 30 men from the village who died in the First World War. Subsequently the parish council bought the two General Post Office (GPO) red phones kiosks in the village, turning one into a defibrillator station and the other into the West Meon Tourist Information Kiosk.

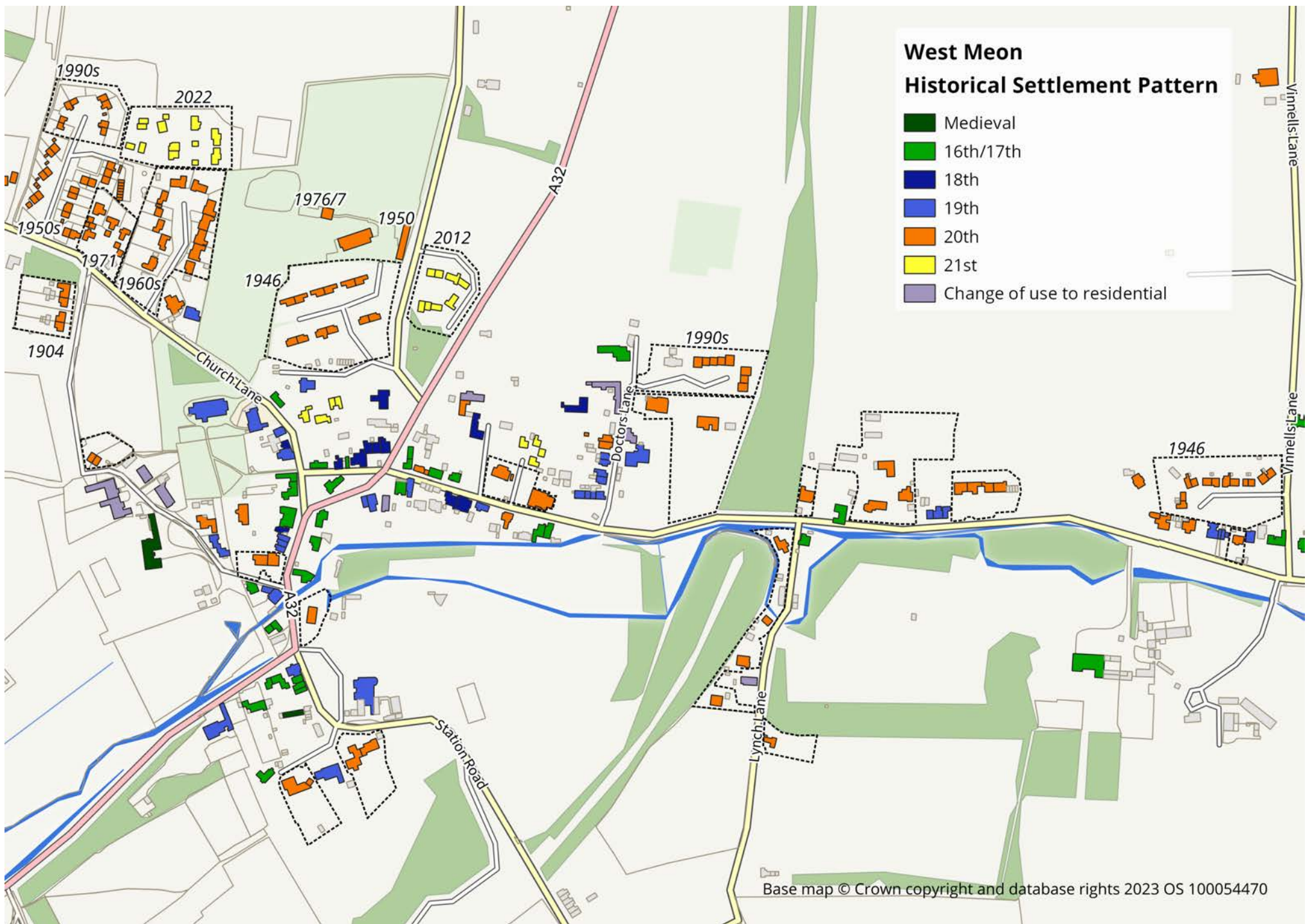
In 2023 West Meon retains its church and school and has a community shop and café, a Post Office two mornings a week, one pub and a butcher. The doctor's surgery continues to provide multiple services and the village has a thriving cultural life along with such amenities as the sports and recreation fields, tennis courts, a children's play area, a village hall, a sports pavilion, and a rifle range. The Meon Hut

crossroads on the A32 to the north of the village has a pub, petrol station with shop and a nearby café.

Key issues for West Meon were highlighted through the consultation exercises. Many of these were not relevant to include within a village design statement and in some cases, are addressed within policies for the National Park in the South Downs Local Plan.



Rural setting of parish sports facilities



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THE VILLAGE AND ITS SETTING

West Meon lies within The Western Downs and forms an important part of the South Downs National Park. This broad area of large-scale open farmland is located in the north-west of the National Park and is close to the historic city of Winchester, where the South Downs Way starts.

The landscape comprises rolling chalk downland around 100 metres above sea level, rising to 200 metres. The total land area of the West Meon parish is 1,527 hectares, most of which is farmland; roughly half arable and half pasture. There is a little over 40 hectares of woodland scattered in small pockets throughout the parish. The village itself remains compact, almost hidden from view within the valley on any approach. The many mature trees around the centre of the village, create an almost enclosed atmosphere that harmonises the village with its surrounding countryside. This is one of the key design characteristics about the village and it is important that the VDS considers the impact of development and landscape change on the village as viewed from key vantage

points the settlement edge is particularly sensitive to expansion which may have a negative effect on the hidden village.

The treasured views in and out of the village and the hidden views are considered significant to the overall character and setting of West Meon.

TREASURED VIEWS INCLUDE:

- 1 Looking South from the top of North Field
- 2 Looking north west from the churchyard towards Lippen
- 3 Approaching the village on the footpath from Warnford
- 4 On the Old Road looking south east beyond Chappetts Copse
- 5 Churchyard looking south

The river Meon divides the parish neatly in two parts, with the land rising steeply on both sides of the valley. It flows in a westerly direction from East

Meon to the village where it turns south towards Warnford.

West Meon's importance as a settlement is not only its proximity with the river, but also because it is where the valley road meets the main road from the north. The core of the settlement is formed by the junctions of Warnford Road, Church Lane and The Cross. It is apparent from historic photographs of this area that it was much more the centre of the village than it is now.² The original nucleus of the village lies

astride this junction and followed the course of the river, while extending to the north-west along to the church. The form of West Meon is shaped both by its location in the Meon Valley, at a point where the river is quite narrow, and the valley's role as a north-south communications route. The former dictates the essentially linear form of the settlement, while the latter has influenced its modern development.

A characteristic feature of West Meon are the small isolated areas of built development at

Woodlands, Mardell and Lippen, to the north and west of the main village, and also to the south at Sheepbridge. There is some ribbon development as the settlement spreads eastwards along the valley road; this area is separated from the village centre by the disused railway embankment. Whitewool lies to the east, on a tributary of the Meon.

Local authority housing, to the periphery of the then built-up area, was built at Meonwara Crescent, Headon View and Long Priors. These were unlike the



A

West Meon village is hidden by the landscape in the view from Station Road to Lippen



Lippen housing



West Meon School

² Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan West Meon February 2017



Storey's Meadow



Stone's Yard



Sheltered housing in Doctor's Lane

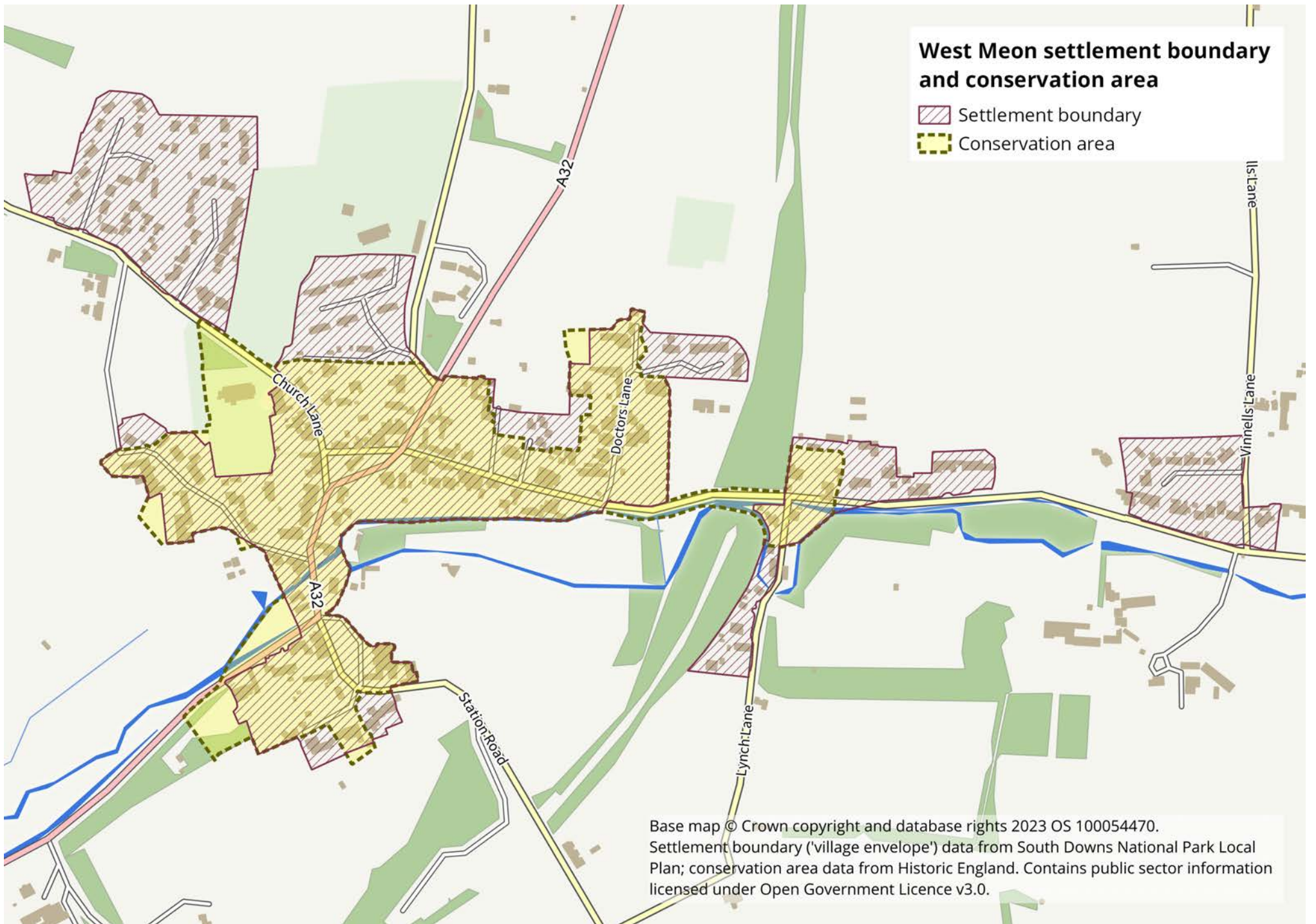
traditional buildings along the village thoroughfares, as they are built on a cul-de-sac layout. They introduced a more uniform housing style to the village. It is significant to note that these houses were built on good-sized plots, and now because of this, they sit well in the landscape as the gardens have matured. In contrast to this are the two developments at Knapps Hard and the former Drill Hall site, built in the 1960's and 1970's. These are sizeable detached houses on much smaller plots and, as a result, they are yet to sit well within the landscape particularly because the development is comparatively high density and the rear gardens are not shielded by planting or mature trees from the countryside beyond: the properties remain quite visible.

Further small blocks of social housing were added towards the end of the twentieth century at Long Priors and Doctors Lane to meet specific local needs for older residents, single people and families. A more sympathetic approach to the environment is evident in the design of these. New development also occurred as 'in-fill' beside Headon View at Wolverton Gardens and at Stone's Yard on the High Street. On a rural exception site on Old Alton Road, (also known as Marlands Lane), a development was completed of ten low-cost houses for rent in perpetuity: these are governed by an S106 Agreement. This development, Storey's Meadow, is seen as contemporary and sympathetic to its context, being of a farmyard design and using characteristic forms and materials.

DESIGN GUIDELINES The Village and its Setting

- New development should respect the character and setting of the village. The village of West Meon is barely seen from the approach roads. An emphasis on local views is considered as an important characteristic of the village to be maintained.
- The overall character and setting of West Meon should be conserved and respected in the design of any new development: these should respect the open countryside between individual settlements within the Parish and be in harmony with landscape features.
- The boundaries of the village are defined within the South Downs Local Plan 2019 and any development in the settlements within the Parish should retain their separate identities.
- Infilling between existing small areas of development should demonstrate that they are conserving the traditional form, street patterns, open spaces and the 'enclosed' rural character.

The conversion of existing farm buildings, subdivision of plots and some infilling within the built-up area boundary has also added to the housing stock. In addition to residential buildings, sustainable tourism ventures have introduced holiday yurts at Whitewool, pods at the Thomas Lord and safari glamping tents above Brocklands Farm.



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THE LANDSCAPE-LED APPROACH

When well cared-for, landscapes provide some of the essentials of life, such as clean air and water, food, and raw materials. They help to regulate our climate, store flood waters, filter pollution and provide opportunities for us to improve our health and well-being. If we can understand what makes our local landscapes special, what gives our parish its ‘sense of place’, then we may understand how it will be sensitive to development and change. This understanding can then be used to inform local planning policies and individual planning decisions and protect local distinctiveness.

The South Downs National Park Authority, through the Local Plan requires a landscape-led approach to design. This is a proactive way of bringing forward development that respects the local character, through sensitive and high-quality design that makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area.

Proposals should seek to enhance local character and distinctiveness of the area as a place where people want to live and work now and in the future.

The definition of landscape encompasses all types and forms, including the historic landscape character and also townscape. This approach is achieved by understanding all the elements which comprise ‘character’, their sensitivity, and the important roles they might play for people and wildlife.

These elements are then used to inform design decisions, creating a genuine local sense of place, and helping new developments integrate into the existing landscape framework.

The approach ensures all changes within the National Park are sensitive to both the landscape character, views, and visibility. Founded upon good evidence of landscape, the approach requires interpretation and application of this evidence through each design decision, from a conceptual layout, right down to architectural details and material choices.

Village Design Statements are well-placed to generate and present locally specific landscape evidence to help to inform planners, developers, and locally appropriate policies.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Landscape character is the way in which both landscape and visual character is understood and used to help inform change. It is defined as: “The pattern of elements which make one place distinct from another.”

Importantly landscape character can be understood at any scale and community-led planning is an ideal way to add local detail to existing evidence. Local landscape character evidence will form the foundation of this Village Design Statement and the policies identified within it.

It is important that development proposals are based on a meaningful understanding of the context and character of an area and those positive characteristics which define local distinctiveness.

THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT OF WEST MEON

The local landscape character assessment provides the background details that help us understand the landscape around West Meon and the variations within.

The elements and patterns that contribute towards our local landscape are:

- Geology and soils,
- Landform and water,
- Roads/tracks/paths,
- Settlement pattern,
- Woodland,
- Field boundaries

Every place is characterised by these same elements, however it is the different patterns and combinations of these elements that has driven the local economy over time, provided a sense of inspiration, enjoyment and secured the special qualities that enhance our quality of life - such as tranquillity. Human intervention through the type



Bluebells at Lippen

and way we farm, deal with land ownership and wildlife have created the place in which we live. The sum of all these interactions and elements are what makes West Meon distinctive.

Geology and Soils

Situated within the Meon Valley, West Meon’s character is influenced by its physical geography. The river Meon is a chalk valley system and chalk has not only shaped the landscape, but in turn, has played a significant role in influencing the natural vegetation, wildlife, agriculture, and industrial history.



Dip Slope West Meon

The shape and features of downland have been determined by the behaviour of the chalk and clay. The soft clay being eroded faster than the more resistant chalk, has over time led to the

characteristic downland appearance of low hills with two distinctive sides. A steeper side, called the scarp slope and a gently sloping side, known as the dip slope. As a porous rock, chalk can store enormous volumes of water and deep below the surface arise the underground aquifers.

The movement of this water is a critical feature in defining what are a 'branching valley system', that drains the dip slope of the chalk downs. These valleys all contain a river along at least part of their length and with the chalk bedrock characterise some of the clearest, most beautiful stretches of water in southern England. Chalk systems often follow geological fault lines and these can be the cause of the winterbournes in the upper reaches of the river.

Landform and Water

The soft chalk weathers relatively easily, producing a rolling, smooth landform, on the Downs and the gently sloping valleys typically produce a U-shaped valley although they can take an asymmetric form, where the valley meets a geological fold.

The floodplain is typically narrow.

Chalk valleys geology and the filtering of water passing through timeless amounts of chalk means the river water can be 'gin clear'. In parts of the village the river is a Winterbourne where at times of prolonged rain there is a flow of water but this dries out in the summer months. The highly characteristic chalk rivers are globally rare, there being only 210

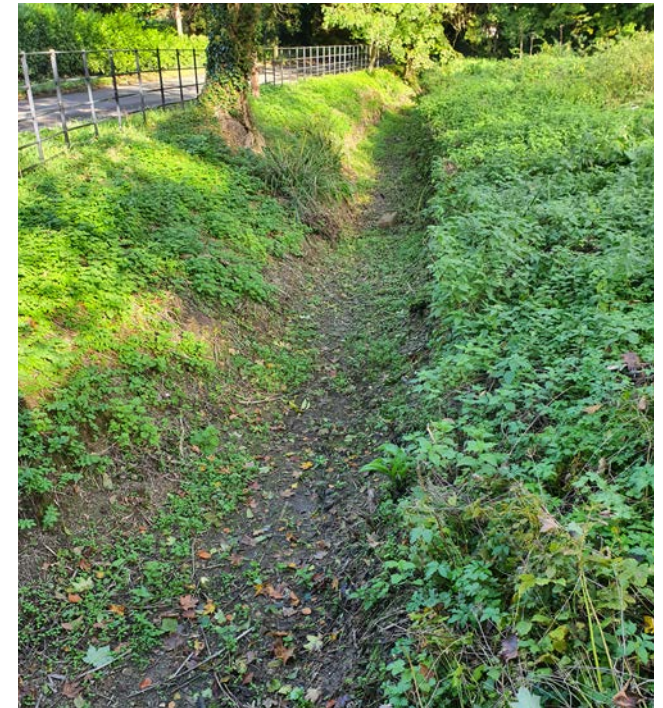
in the world, and 160 of them are in England. The Meon is the highest rising chalk stream in the UK.

The river was originally the principal source of power in the village, and water mills were built along the riverbank. However, it now meanders through the village, largely unseen because of development that has taken place along its banks. Nevertheless, the community of West Meon takes



The river in winter at spate

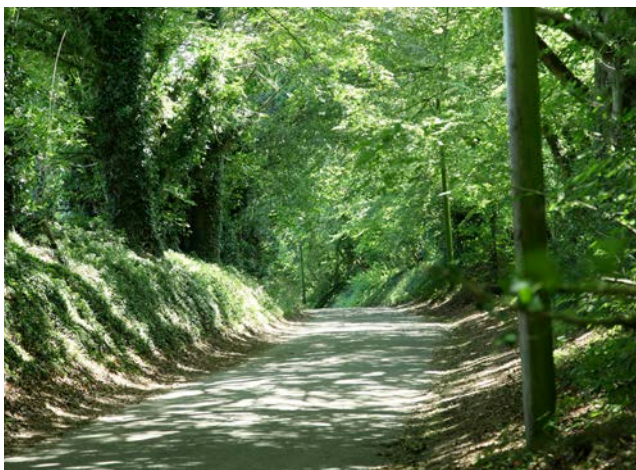
pride in knowing that the river is there, and it provides a sense of tranquillity in the heart of the village. In addition to the abundance of plants that flourish in and alongside it, the river is home to a variety of river fly and aquatic insects. Among the animals are herons, moorhens, kingfisher, and little egret. Along the edge of the Conservation Area, the river runs in a water meadow, interrupted by the former railway embankment, which is now heavily wooded. It is tightly confined by private gardens as it enters the settlement, passes under the main road, and then turns south on the route to Warnford.



As a winterbourne most summers

Roads, Tracks and Paths

Chalk Valleys support a simple, linear pattern of infrastructure, which typically follows the valley bottom. Smaller roads run perpendicular from these main valley bottom routes. Many rights of way follow historic routes and the patterns they create can be distinctive, offering opportunities to experience the landscape from these well-trodden paths. The Meon Valley Trail follows the valley bottom too, utilising the historic railway line between Wickham and West Meon.



Church Lane

Within West Meon roads are narrow, often with no path and bounded by walls or tightly clipped hedges of laurel, yew and holly. This provides for a rural and intimate characteristic of the village. Often new development can introduce suburban features such as close boarded fencing that result in a change of character of these small lanes and narrow roads.

PHOTO TO BE FOUND

Beech hedging

Settlement Pattern

The narrow floodplains created a higher degree of vulnerability to flooding and therefore the areas of settlement have always been on the higher land, yet still close to the river. West Meon is typical of this inherited characteristic and is one of a string of nucleated settlements of at least medieval origin, along the river's length. It is characterised by its riverside location. Open space within the settlement is vital to its character.

Typically, the valley sides support scattered farmsteads of largely 18th-19th century origins which are set within regular enclosures of the same date.



The village is surrounded by chalk downland

West Meon is an historic village located on the Dip Slope broad area of the National Park. Its hilly relief gives views across the surrounding countryside to and from the village. The settlement is mostly surrounded by chalk downland, much of which has been ploughed and is farmland of arable and pasture. There are pockets of woodland scattered throughout the parish. The village itself remains compact, almost hidden from view within the valley. The many mature trees around the centre of the village lead to an almost enclosed atmosphere. The river Meon divides the parish in two with the land rising steeply on both sides of the valley.

TREASURED VIEWS

Map showing all views on page 30



2 *Looking northwest from the Churchyard towards Lippen*



3 *Approaching the village on the footpath from Warnford*



4 *Looking southeast from the Old Road to the downs beyond Hen Wood*



5 *From the churchyard looking south*

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Water meadows

Field Boundaries

West Meon's long association with the river is probably best demonstrated by the water meadows within the floodplain at the eastern and south western reaches of the village. Dating back to the post-medieval era these small, irregular-shaped fields were created within this narrow floodplain to make the most of the fertile soils and water supply. From November until early spring, the flooding of these meadows was a regular feature of valley farming in the 17th and 18th centuries. The water promoted the early growth of grass roots, resulting in higher quality grass and hay in the summer. Water meadows are bounded by ditches and drainage channels.

Contemporary with many of the buildings in the village, the water meadows are a defining characteristic of West Meon, providing a characteristic setting to key historic buildings such as The Court House and the adjacent barns.

The valley sides were managed differently, the fields are much larger – still a fairly regular pattern

but with sinuous boundaries which emphasise the topography. Today these fields largely support arable crops. Boundaries typically comprise hedge-rows and sometimes thicker belts of trees where they follow tracks/routes.

Perceptual Qualities

West Meon's sense of place comes from its long history and the intimate scale of a small river valley which produces a particular characteristic and feeling. The river Meon meanders through

the village and the community of West Meon takes pride in the river as it provides a sense of tranquillity in the heart of the village. The interest and value of the river Meon are enhanced by the water meadows that lie alongside it. Today, the water meadows form an attractive green boundary providing a vital element of rural conservation and the setting for heritage buildings. The village is noteworthy for its collection of well-preserved late Eighteenth and early nineteenth century domestic architecture. It is a village with a significant number



Fields above the flood plain

of period buildings, forty-one of which are listed. Trees make a major visual contribution to a number of building settings within the village.

West Meon is surrounded by farmland which has long been important in preserving the unique character of the village. A notable feature of the open space around the village is that they are linked by footpaths making it possible to enjoy circular walks around the area. The disused railway line is seen by villagers to be of both historical and ecological importance; a place to walk, ride or cycle, free from traffic and with outstanding views of the countryside.

Famous associations linked to the village include Thomas Lord who was an English cricketer best remembered as the founder of Lord's Cricket Ground. He retired to West Meon, where he died in 1832. Lord is buried in the churchyard of St John the Evangelist.

The many historic features contribute to the shape and style of West Meon. They have economic value, providing the setting for traditional rural economic activity and now helping to attract business and tourism. They have social and community value, as an important part in people's lives, bringing enjoyment and inspiration and providing tranquillity that enhances the quality of life for those who live or visit here.

There is environmental value, as a home for wildlife and flora: some rare or in need of conservation. Some species like the Red Kite and Common Buzzard are thriving in the village landscape after their reintroduction to the south of England. While a

scheme to re-establish water voles in the river Meon makes steady progress and otters are regular visitors to areas of the Meon Valley.

The many distinct views which are features of the parish define our landscape. These aspects are special to the people of West Meon and their concerns have shaped the commentary of how these places and areas should be recognised, conserved, and enhanced for future generations. The Local Character Assessment (LCA) forms the foundation of the VDS, articulating why these places and areas are valued, and respected in planning applications and judgements. Its use is intended as a guide in making decisions by those who use the landscape or may make proposals that may change the landscape. It is amongst the small details that change can gradually remove the 'soft edges' of the village.

THE FARMED LAND

West Meon is set within an agricultural landscape and is significant in that it shapes the landscape in colour and form. Farmed land today is given over to the growing of crops like wheat, barley, oilseed rape and oats and beans. The underlying soil is clay cap with flints overlying a chalk basin with gravels in the valley bottom. Many of the fields have had hedges removed in the twentieth century to create large field spaces of up to 100 acres (42 hectares) to enable farm machinery to use the land more efficiently. Farm sizes are in the region of 400 acres (208 hectares) and currently six farms operate in the parish.



Flight of the red kites



Buzzards are now residents and nest in trees along the embankment. © Coatesy

The fields that are in production are generally above the flood plain; those within it hold sheep and some cattle. Recent concerns about loss of habitat and species has seen an increase in the size of some field margins, particularly where footpaths or bridleways exist. Farmed and other agricultural land is often used for traditional countryside pursuits,

for example sand schools, equestrian pursuits and game bird rearing and shooting. This should be encouraged where it can be of benefit to the community and provide employment while at the same time maintaining the tranquillity of the countryside.

The continuation of farming is essential to West Meon and the Meon Valley as both an employer and custodian of the landscape. The loss of agriculture may pose a challenge to the landscape when through change of use it can be seen as potential land for development.



Field boundary in winter

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Landscape Character

- Development should respect the character of the countryside, be in harmony with landscape features and setting, take account of the important biodiversity and the vistas and views which are features of the parish.
- The key sensitivities, landscape management and development considerations and other recommendations identified in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA) and in the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the parish of West Meon should be respected.
- Low native hedging, trees and shrubs are a feature of the parish and should be preserved – and encouraged in any landscaping for new developments – so as to retain the rural nature of the area.
- Property boundaries requiring enclosure should have hedging, preferably native species such as Yew, or fencing which is contextually appropriate. Fencing within private plots that face the open landscape should be contextually appropriate and sensitively designed to reflect the rural nature of the area such as post-and-rail with native hedge planting.
- Due regard should be given to the SDNPA’s ‘dark skies’ policy in respect to lighting throughout the parish. Lighting should be limited to the minimum necessary for safety and security, be designed to be in keeping with the character of the surroundings and minimise light spill by incorporating fixtures within building design.
- Potential impacts of development on distant views (eg. prominent materials, large windows or roof-lights which reflect the light, prominent roofs on the skyline, isolated buildings amidst fields) should be avoided and new developments should not intrude on the skyline when seen from key viewpoints.
- Hedgerows should be encouraged as they create natural boundaries around fields and between the built environment and farmed land or open countryside. Where possible their removal should be discouraged.
- Hedgerows that are removed, for example during construction or renovation, should be replaced with native species.
- New development should not be visually detrimental to views identified as significant to the character and setting of West Meon. Among these are the views into and out of the village where the buildings of the village are hidden from view on approach into the settlement as well as the views from the settlement to distant vantage points.



Farming on downland at Sheepbridge

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Farmed Land

- Farmed land provides habitat for a range of flora and fauna. New, or changes to existing, farming practices should take steps to improve biodiversity. Any adverse impact on the natural environment should be avoided.
- Traditional countryside pursuits will be supported where there is a clear community benefit. Any new development should not harm or interfere with the tranquil environment in the wider parish.
- Where possible wide field verges and native wildflowers are to be encouraged.
- Agricultural, commercial, and industrial buildings should seek to preserve the rural characteristics of the parish and be located where they can be absorbed into the landscape, and not impact identified local views.
- The choice of building materials is important with consideration of the timber, knapped flint, mellow red bricks and using second hand stocks where possible.

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THE RIVER MEON VALLEY AND FLOOD PLAIN LANDSCAPE

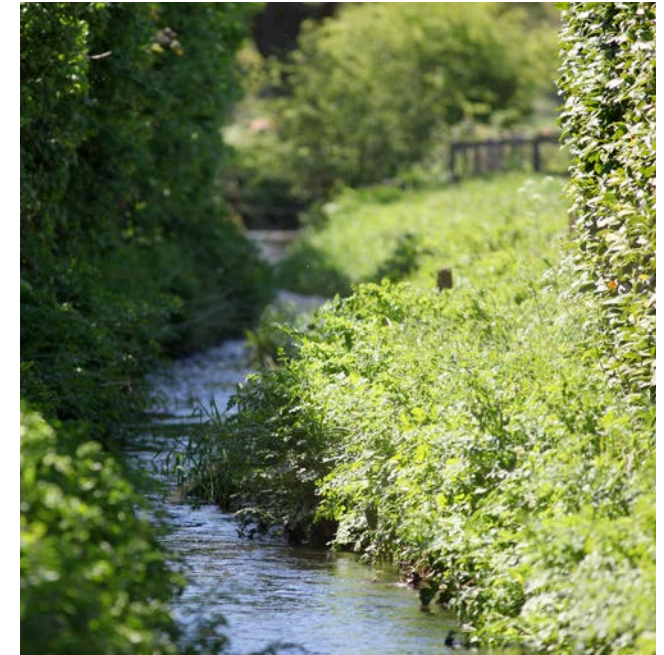
The 2011 South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA) designates West Meon as a 'Chalk Valley System', which describes the features of this natural water source in terms of a 'branching valley systems that drain the dip slope of the chalk downs and contain a river along at least part of their length. They often follow the lines of faults in the chalk and are winterbournes in their upper reaches.'

The Chalk Valley Systems have a number of sensitive natural, cultural, and aesthetic features that are vulnerable to change. Historically, meadow-land alongside the river was integral to the medieval sheep-corn husbandry regime, providing valuable winter and spring grazing for the extensive communal sheep flocks.

In addition to the abundance of plants that flourish in and alongside the river it is home to a substantial variety of insects and bird life. Along the edge of the Conservation Area, the river runs in a water meadow, interrupted at one point by the former railway embankment, which is now heavily wooded. The area includes the setting of a number of listed properties of historical importance including Hall Place (Grade II*), West Meon House (Grade II), Court House (Grade II).



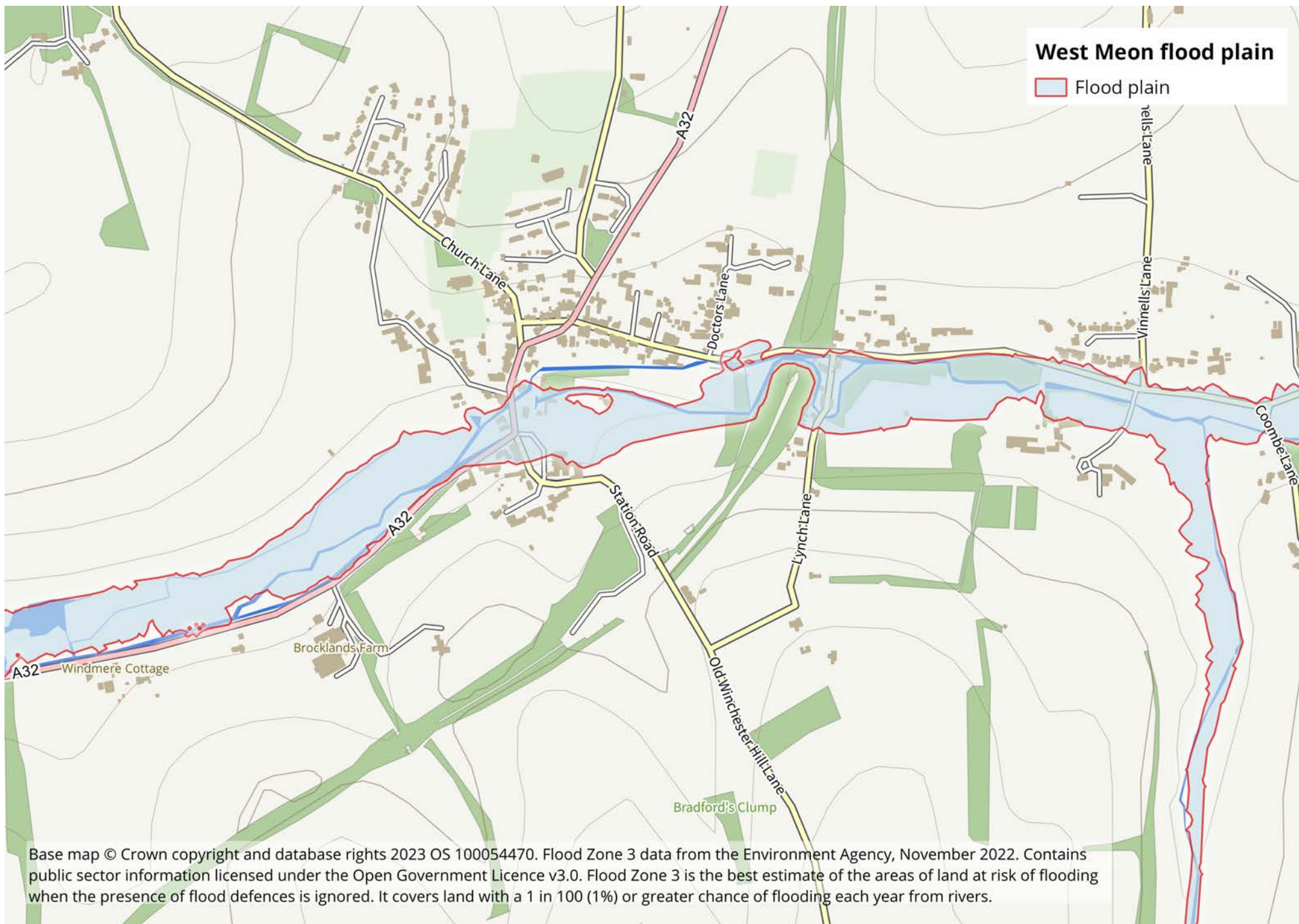
The water vole has returned to the Meon through a re-introduction scheme © Dick Hawkes



The river is often hidden from view in the village

DESIGN GUIDELINES River And Flood Plain Landscape

- The undeveloped flood plain is an important area of the village to preserve as an historical environment as well as a significant landscape within the settlement
- Conserve and enhance the West Meon floodplain especially the areas of flood meadow semi-improved, and the wet grassland areas
- Conserve and manage the network of hedgerows and waterside trees of the valley floor
- Development within the floodplain area including changes to agricultural practises should take into account and conserve and enhance the features of historical and cultural nature such as: evidence of historic crossing points; the now disused railway line embankment; and original water mills.
- Agricultural practice should always seek to encourage river wildlife and support riparian habitats and species.



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TREES, ROUTES AND OPEN SPACES

ANCIENT WOODLAND, COPSES, AND TREES

Woodlands in this landscape are typically relatively small and irregular in form. Often located on the steeper slopes of the valley sides they provide an important context to the village. There is a little over 40 hectares of woodland scattered in small pockets throughout the parish. The village itself remains compact, almost hidden from view within the valley on any approach. The many mature trees around the centre of the village, create an almost enclosed atmosphere that harmonises the village with its surrounding countryside.

There are a number of magnificent trees within the village, many of which are protected by tree preservation orders. The origins of many of the hedges and wooded areas can be traced back to Saxon times. Among the ancient woodlands is Chappetts Copse, located at the eastern boundary of the village on Coombe Lane and a Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust nature reserve. There

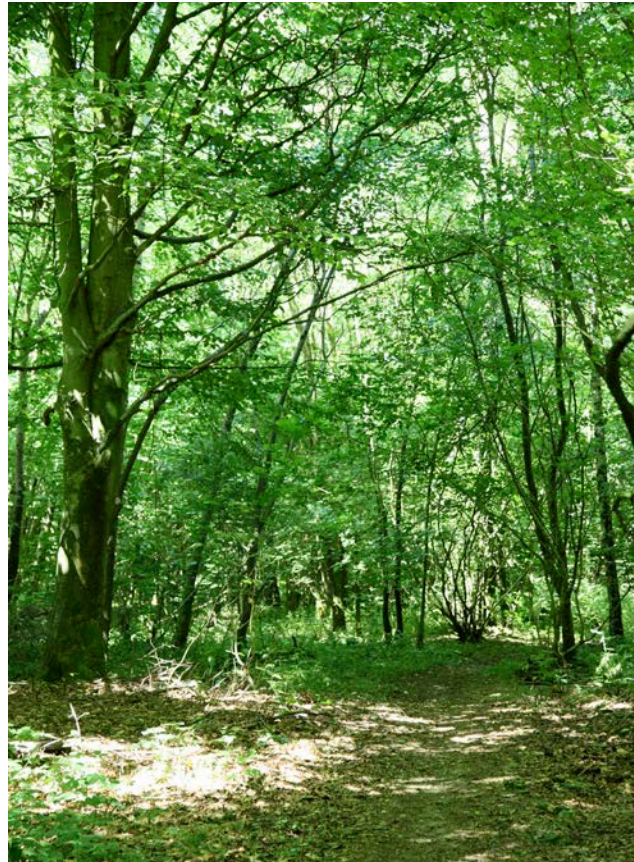
are many woodland flowers that grow in the dappled light beneath the Beech trees and in the many clearings. They include several rare species of orchid: of particular importance are the large number of sword-leaved helleborines (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) which usually flower in May. The reserve is one of the main sites in the country for these rare plants.

The woodland is home to many common plants including spurge, laurel and woodruff and is a haven for woodland birds. These include the greater spotted woodpecker, black cap, chiffchaff, and wren which nest each year. Others, such as the kestrel, tawny owl, buzzard and spotted flycatcher, have been recorded. To the north of the site the planted yew trees dominate, creating a shadier feel to this part of the reserve, with few flowering plants. Silver-washed fritillary is one of a number of butterfly species to be found in the wood.



Sword-leaved helleborines

Shutts Copse is a broadleaved woodland with ancient Hazel coppice. This small woodland is located to the north of West Meon alongside the A272. It was clear felled shortly after the Second World War, which explains why there is a lack of large 'standard' trees. However, this wood still displays a diverse woodland flora, with plant species such as wood anemone, primrose, and Solomon's seal. There are woodland birds, including the tawny



Lippen Wood

owl, great spotted woodpecker, and coal tit.

In addition, there are substantial woodlands at Lippen, Mardell and Hayling Wood. There are many species of wildlife to be found on farmland and other wooded areas surrounding the village. Amongst these are fallow, roe and muntjac deer, fox, hare, stoat and badger.



Silver-washed fritillary © Neil Hulme

DESIGN GUIDELINES Ancient Woodland and Trees

- Development proposals should not adversely impact on mature native trees or hedges that contribute to the character of the settlements and the wider views
- Woodland areas such as Lippen, Mardell and Hayling Wood should be considered as important areas that contribute to the character and biodiversity in the parish
- Where possible, all replacement trees in private land, woodland, and adjoining areas of tree plantation should be of native species that are common to the chalk landscape.

THE MEON VALLEY TRAIL (MVT)



The Meon Valley Trail

The disused railway line is regarded by parishioners to be of historical and ecological importance. A charming place to walk, ride or cycle, free from traffic and with outstanding views of the countryside, it is a wildlife corridor with orchids and chalkland butterflies. The old Station Yard at the MVT trailhead now has the Nature Station: a fenced area that is used by the village school and others for wildlife study. Developed by Hampshire Countryside Services with support from South Down volunteers and the West Meon school it provides an area where plants and wildlife can be

observed in a setting that is largely undisturbed, although maintained.

The regeneration of the trailhead, with new interpretation boards and better surfacing of the trail, has meant the MVT has gained in popularity.

DESIGN GUIDELINES Meon Valley Trail

- The car park and Meon Valley Trail should keep their understated appearance and not become suburbanised.
- The trail boundaries should be protected to ensure that unauthorised use of the trail by motorised vehicles is prevented. Materials used to maintain or enhance the track should respect the natural features of the location and avoid any suburban appearance.
- Environmental management of the ecology of the MVT should maintain the separate purpose of the 'Nature Station' study area.



The old Station Yard is the start of the trail

It can be seen as important in the SDNP as a way of getting into the heart of the Meon Valley without the use of mechanised transport.

OPEN SPACES

A notable feature of the open spaces around the village is that they tend to be linked by footpaths, making it possible to enjoy circular walks around the area, crossing few roads. Many of these are ancient and connect to the old trackways that traversed West Meon, including the Harrow Way along what is now Lippen Lane and Church Lane. Amongst those frequently used are the paths to Warnford, North Field, the Meon Valley Trail to Droxford and beyond to Bere Farm and Wheely Down.

Bridleways extend from Marlands Farm to Brockwood and a new bridleway has been created from Lippen Lane, linking to a track north of Bere Farm. The footpath that leads from Station Road to the High Street is much used and valued by villagers.

The village recreation ground is an important focus for local activities. Situated off Church Lane and with access to car parking via Headon View it is used by young and old and is considered one of the major assets that builds a sense of community for the village. Ideally located and with attractive views, it has excellent facilities and is frequently in use. The sport and recreational facilities have been improved over the years for all ages and needs: an additional play space for children has most recently been installed in Meonwara Crescent on the east side of the village. While the Sports Pavilion has regular use along with the football and cricket pitches the recreation ground is also a party and theatre space, school sports venue, 5-A-Side tournament fundraiser, and village Jubilee arena.

The old railway embankment is a significant feature. While the viaduct that the crossed the river Meon is long gone, the embankment along with the tunnel to the north of the village are reminders of this industrial heritage. The embankment is overgrown with trees and ownership is in private hands but it remains an important environmental feature of West Meon.

The Cross (photo on page 3) in the centre of the village is regarded by many as a focal point. Though small, it is an open space, a miniature village green within the heart of West Meon where people can sit and reflect. The passing of traffic on the A32 can be intrusive but the site is important in that it breaks up the development in this part of the village and

provides green space in this otherwise built-up conservation area.

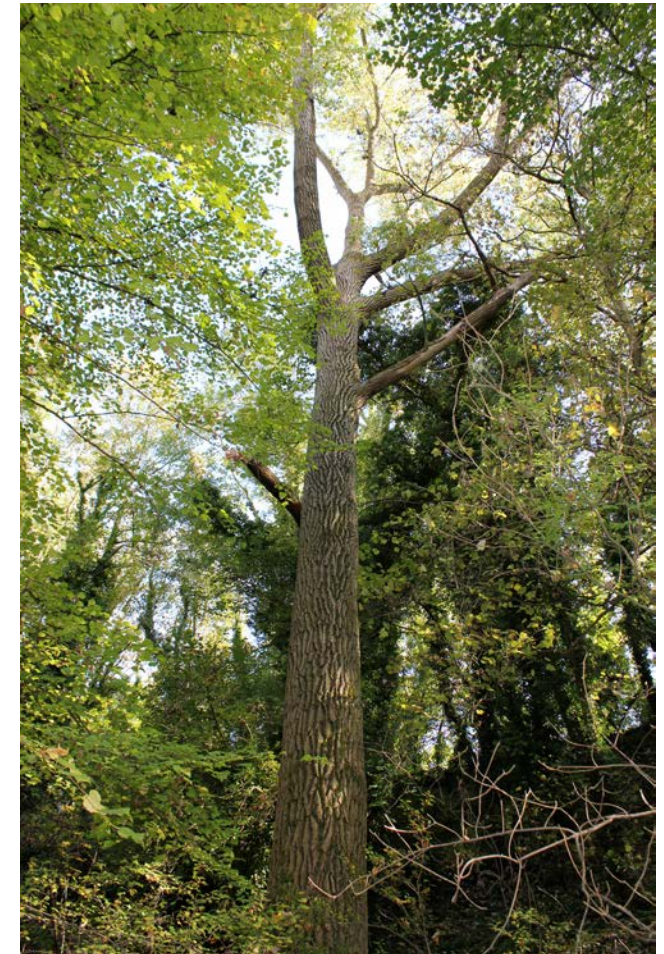
Looking from the churchyard provides open views of the valley and towards Warnford. As well as being of historical and religious importance, the churchyard is a valued open space that is rich in birdlife and wildflowers. The practice of allowing the old part of the churchyard to be less managed has encouraged the growth of wildflowers and attracted wildlife to a substantial green space adjacent to the village school.

Small spaces that can be seen as valuable exist opposite Long Priors and along Floud Lane where grasses and bramble provide good habitat for birds and insects. Left to develop naturally they enrich the environment. The allotments are another feature: a community led project on land adjacent to a farmed field next to the public footpath from Doctors Lane.



Meonwara play and recreation area

Another popular area is the small piece of land adjacent to the river and opposite Meadow House. Though privately owned, it has a permissive footpath to Station Road with a footbridge crossing of the river that provides an enjoyable walk and a rare view of the Meon that is much valued by villagers and visitors alike. The land is triangular in shape and



Black poplar (Populus nigra) on the old railway embankment

bounded by the river and a mill leat. It is however shaded by the railway embankment and covered in nettles and hogweed. It exemplifies an area of land that might benefit from further consideration of its value and use in the future.

DESIGN GUIDELINES Open Spaces

- Green areas and open spaces are an important aspect of the village and must be protected for future generations. Consideration should be given to the routine management and potential replanting of these environments to ensure their continued use in the parish
- New areas of open space should be supported, especially in areas where there is limited provision or where access to existing spaces is difficult. Footpaths to existing and new open spaces will be supported.
- The existing public footpaths are a much-used feature of the parish and provide important health benefits and pleasure for residents and visitors of all ages. Their continued use should be encouraged through effective maintenance and signposting where it is needed.



Chappetts Copse nature reserve

HIDDEN VIEWS



B *Lippen Wood from Marldell*

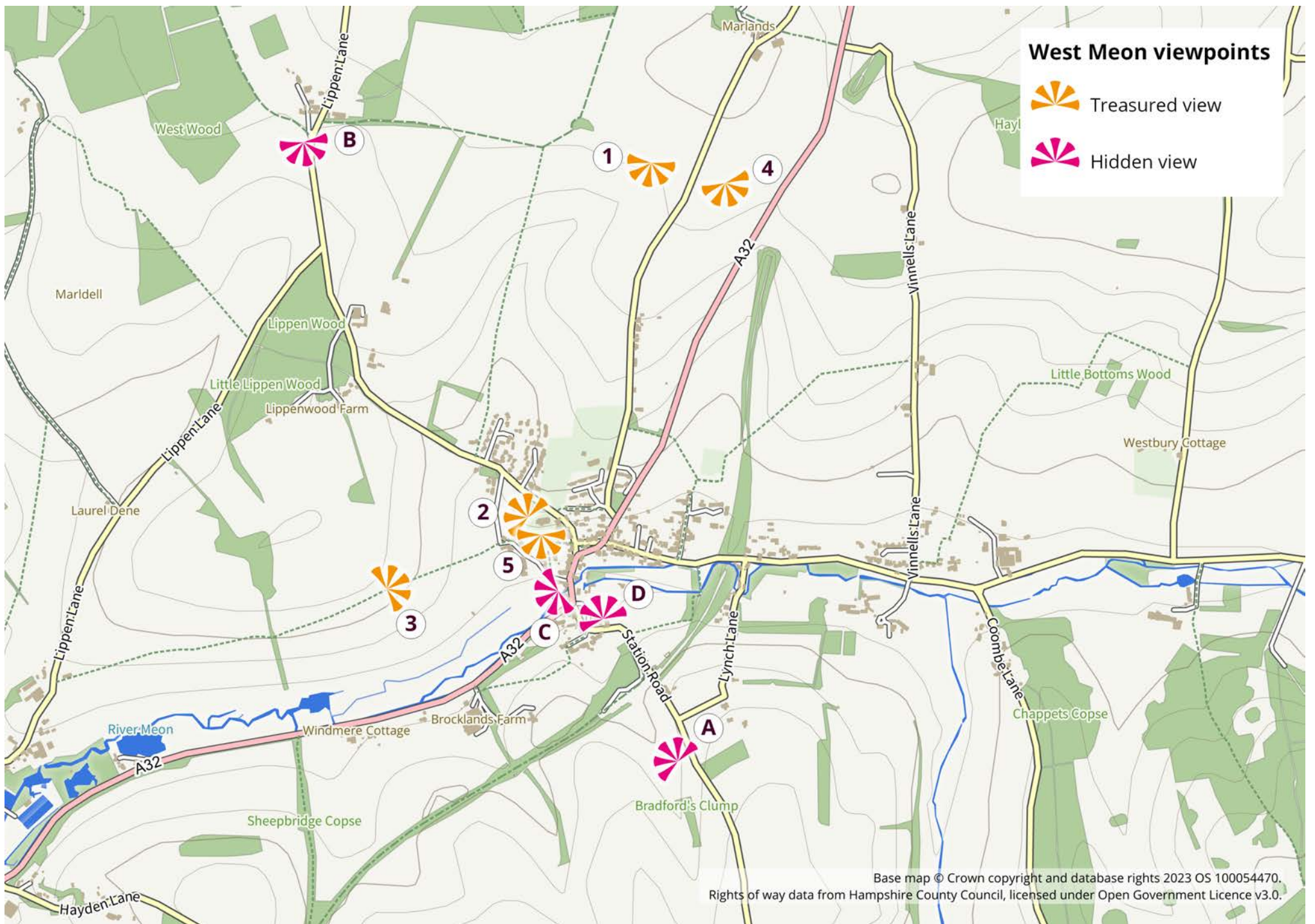


C *Water meadows looking south towards Beacon Hill*



D *Station Road looking towards the church*

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BUILDING FORM, MATERIALS AND DESIGN

West Meon has a Conservation Area. Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Within the West Meon Conservation Area there are 41 Grade II listed buildings and many other individual buildings and groups of buildings, which, although not necessarily unique enough to be listed, are nonetheless of architectural importance and interest. Together these make a notable contribution to the character of the village as a whole. Development within or close to the West Meon Conservation Area needs to be carefully considered and reference to the Conservation Area should be made (map p. 12).

The Conservation Area is drawn tightly round the historical heart of the village, which is characterised by its compact setting of vernacular dwellings. It is centred on the small public area known as The Cross, which has the A32 on one side, which runs north–south and divides the village.

A distinct characteristic of the central part of the village is that many of the older buildings are situated immediately fronting the roads and lanes. Traditional gabled, plaster and timber-framed cottages, many of them thatched and dating from the 16th century, form a striking contrast to the later early 19th century flint and brick properties. The cottages are of one and a half to two storeys in height, giving an overall impression of dwellings which blend into the countryside and are sympathetic to a rural environment.

It is vital that in any development close to traditional buildings in the village, care is taken in the choice of architectural style so as not to detract from the distinctive features of the existing structures. The setting of a listed building is an essential feature of its character and the protection and enhancement of this is therefore an important aspect to be considered.

The village possesses a large number of architecturally important buildings where the scale, proportion, and materials of which are wholly sympathetic to



Cross Cottage



Court Lodge



Jubilee Cottage

their rural surroundings. Buildings throughout the parish are generally one and a half to two storeys high, notable exceptions being Hall Place, West Meon House, Court House, and Lion House (formerly the Red Lion public house and prior to that a Rectory). Terrace properties are present throughout the village.

The front gardens of the traditional dwellings in the centre of the village tend to be small. Low boundary walls in plain brick or brick and flint are common and help to define and integrate adjacent properties. Local flint construction is used throughout the settlement. Fine examples of knapping are the church of St John the Evangelist, the school and West Meon House. But there are many examples of fine detail work by flint craftsmen among the properties of the village.

A wide range of window styles, including sash, casement and the occasional leaded light can be found. Vertically glazed window patterns are predominant in the older cottages. Most of the older roofs are clad in hand-made clay tiles or utilise traditional thatch, although a few are slate. Many roofs have interesting features such as overhanging eaves and tall chimneys with terracotta pots, which reinforce the vertical pattern. Brick chimneys are an important feature, often tall to get good updraft, sometimes highly decorative as at West Meon House. These features give vertical accents to the roof and add interest to the skyline.

Whilst new development should not necessarily attempt to replicate the local traditional styles,

it should be designed to respect nearby traditional colours, textures, materials, shapes, styles, proportions, and components. Particular examples include buildings in Storey's Meadow, Doctors Lane, Marlands Lane, Floud Lane with a terrace of 4 houses and converted barns.

The use of flat roofs, stained timber and UPVC components needs to be considered with great care. A blend of compatible colours can avoid single, monochrome effects and can contribute to the variety of housing styles that is characteristic of the village. The height of new development is also important and should take into account the gradient of the terrain.

Any new development should include a variety of house size and should include off-street parking, as on-street parking can be visibly intrusive and may cause road safety problems in the narrow roadways. Extensions and alterations, wherever possible, should reflect the characteristics of the original building, or, if different, should not dominate the original design. Conservatories should be designed and located with particular care.

Contemporary architecture may be appropriate provided its scale, massing, solid to void proportions and materials are respectful of its context and siting

Particular details: many individual properties have their own unique features such as decorated chimney stacks, ornate window frames and bargeboards, scalloped roof or hanging tiles, crafted thatch features, galletted stonework, date plaques

and estate owner's insignias. Property owners, developers and architects should: a) be encouraged to retain and maintain existing detail work b) continue the tradition of incorporating interesting and sympathetic details in new developments

Low boundary walls in brick or brick and flint are common throughout the parish – often with half-round copings. These plot boundaries contribute significantly to the local character.

The sub-division of agricultural land into paddocks for equestrian uses can have harmful effects on the character of the landscape. The siting and design of fencing, sheds, shelters, and buildings should not adversely impact on the character and appearance of West Meon and its wider landscape setting.



Galletting, where small pieces of stone, tile or brick are pushed into the wet lime mortar

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Building form and materials

- All development should be of a high-quality sustainable design and respect the local character and distinctiveness of West Meon's built, historic and natural environment.
- Development proposals should respect the existing form, scale, siting, massing, materials and layout of its setting and any neighbouring quality buildings.
- Development proposals should be designed to reflect and respect nearby colours, textures, materials, shapes, styles and proportions.
- Incorporate weathered brick, flint or hedging to boundary walls.
- New development should be designed in a way that avoids road widening, and vehicular access arrangements should not be detrimental to the character of the lanes, respecting the informal 'country lane' characteristics: new kerbing or fencing should be discouraged and rural verges and features should be retained.
- Provide car parking within the curtilage of the site.

Alterations, extensions or conversion of existing buildings will need to consider:

- Original or sympathetic materials, components and styling should be used to match to those of the existing building.
- Extensions should reflect the original building's characteristics in the proportions of windows to walls and in the design of the roof. Most buildings in the village sit within the landscape. Vertical extensions are therefore unlikely to be appropriate.
- Conservatories should be designed and located with particular care.
- Proposals should retain adequate car parking spaces within the curtilage of the plot (with permeable surfaces) for aesthetic and road safety reasons. Extra surfacing for car parking should, however, be resisted where they compromise building settings, roadside verges or boundary treatments.
- Improvements such as replacement windows should reflect the design of the property.
- Thatched roofs should be preserved wherever possible and not be replaced by another material and should consider nesting and roosting opportunities for birds and bats.
- Alterations and changes to plot boundaries should retain, repair or improve existing walls and hedge planting.



CONCLUSION

WHO IS IT FOR AND WHAT AREA DOES IT COVER?

In any community, change is brought about not only by new buildings, but also by smaller alterations and additions to homes and gardens, open spaces, paths, street furniture, walls and hedges which can affect the look and feel of a whole village.

Some of these changes can be brought about without the need for planning permission, through permitted development rights or minor changes to land or buildings. The VDS provides guidance for anyone considering development in the area. It will be valuable to individual householders wishing to build extensions or put in new windows and to planners, developers and architects considering new buildings.

It provides a source of ideas for designers to work with local building styles and themes and reflect not only some traditions within West Meon but also inspire new trends that are complimentary and bold and look to the future whilst acknowledging the past.

The West Meon Village Design Statement references the Conservation Area (map p.12) and covers the village and its immediate surroundings, as defined in the Local Plan, but the principles and guidelines may be applicable elsewhere in the parish, for example at Woodlands and Whitewool. In general, areas outside the settlement boundary are covered by the Countryside Policy.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The VDS describes the settlements in the parish of West Meon as they are today and highlights the qualities that parishioners value. It is intended to be a practical tool capable of influencing decisions affecting design and development in the parish. It should assist the Parish Council, Winchester City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority when considering planning applications.

It is intended to be adopted as a formal Supplementary Planning Document by the South Downs National Park Authority as the Planning Authority for the area. Applicants for planning permission will need to show that they have taken account of the guidance when drawing up their proposals.

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APPENDIX A

Consultation Process

The preparation of the first Village Design Statement (VDS) for West Meon began in October 2000 with the Parish Council launching the proposal at a public meeting in the village hall under the guidance of Winchester City Council. The project was completed in October 2002 when the VDS was submitted to Winchester City Council for adoption.

A proposal to create a group of West Meon Parish Council (WMPC) members and interested parishioners to update the VDS and create a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) to advance the environmental aspects of West Meon in keeping with the establishment of the South Downs National Park was proposed by WMPC at the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) on April 26th 2017. (APM Minutes 2017) “...so that future development is more in harmony with its setting and contributes to the conservation and improvement of the local environment” (SDNP).*

The initial VDS/LCA decisions were taken on Monday January 22nd 2018 by the VDS/EAS Group chaired by WMPC Chairman Chris Waller and a group of WMPC members and interested parishioners. The group recommended a process for a renewed VDS/LCA.

Following the above and with the approval of WMPC, an initial public consultation event was

held on 17th May 2018 at the Annual Parish Meeting (APM Minutes 2018). Central to this was the West Meon Opinion Finders activity. A display of local information about West Meon as well as photographs presented ideas and comments from earlier discussion on the topic of ‘what made West Meon unique’. The Opinion Finders activity asked parishioners to deliberate and then give their individual answers to the following:

1. What do you consider to be significant buildings and structures in West Meon?
2. What do you consider to be treasured views and open spaces in West Meon?
3. What landscapes and views do you consider at risk in West Meon?
4. What buildings and structures do you consider at risk in West Meon?
5. What are the special features, places, and unique aspects of West Meon?

The responses from parishioners contributed to aspects of the VDS, particularly in relation to open spaces. The consultation was instrumental in identifying the Treasured Views that are presented in the VDS.

A second parishioner’s consultation followed at the APM on April 25th 2019 (APM Minutes 2019). This reviewed the Opinion Finders results and displayed the early draft VDS and LCA. Subsequently WMPC submitted to SDNP a document of text for

the revised VDS/LCA and following a process of drafting and redrafting and further consultation, the completed West Meon VDS/LCA was approved at the parish meeting XXXX.

* <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/community-planning/village-design-statements/>

APPENDIX B

Treasured Views

- 1 Looking South from the top of North Field
- 2 Looking north west from the churchyard towards Lippen
- 3 Approaching the village on the footpath from Warnford
- 4 On the Old Road looking south east beyond Chappetts Copse
- 5 Churchyard looking south

Hidden Views

- A Station Road to Lippen
- B Lippen Wood from Marldell
- C Water meadows looking south towards Beacon Hill
- D Station Road looking towards the church



View from the churchyard looking north west.



View from the Warnford footpath looking north.

Shutts Copse

Lippen Wood

Floud Lane

Church Lane

Peat Lion Road

A32

Doctor's Lane

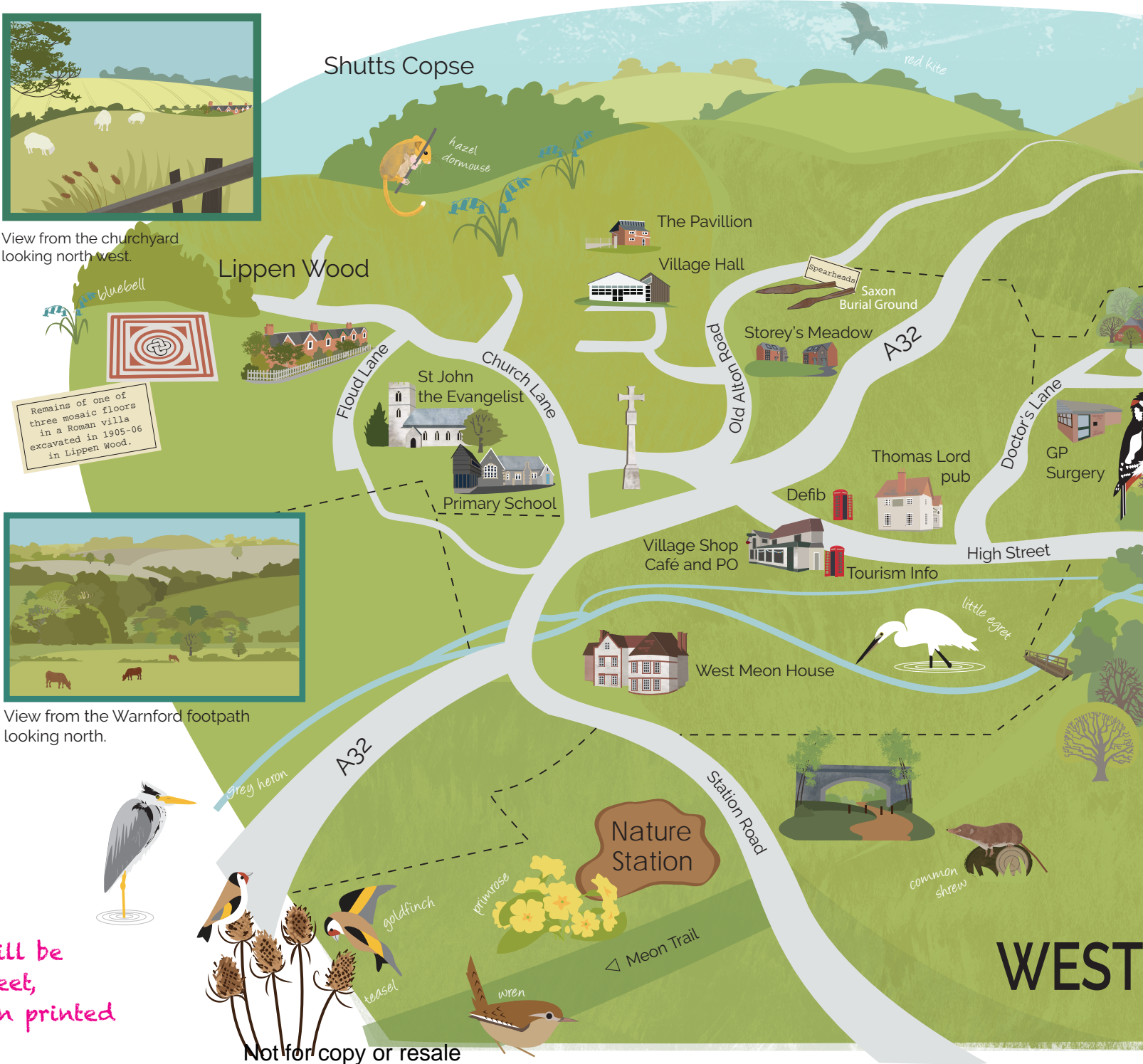
A32

Station Road

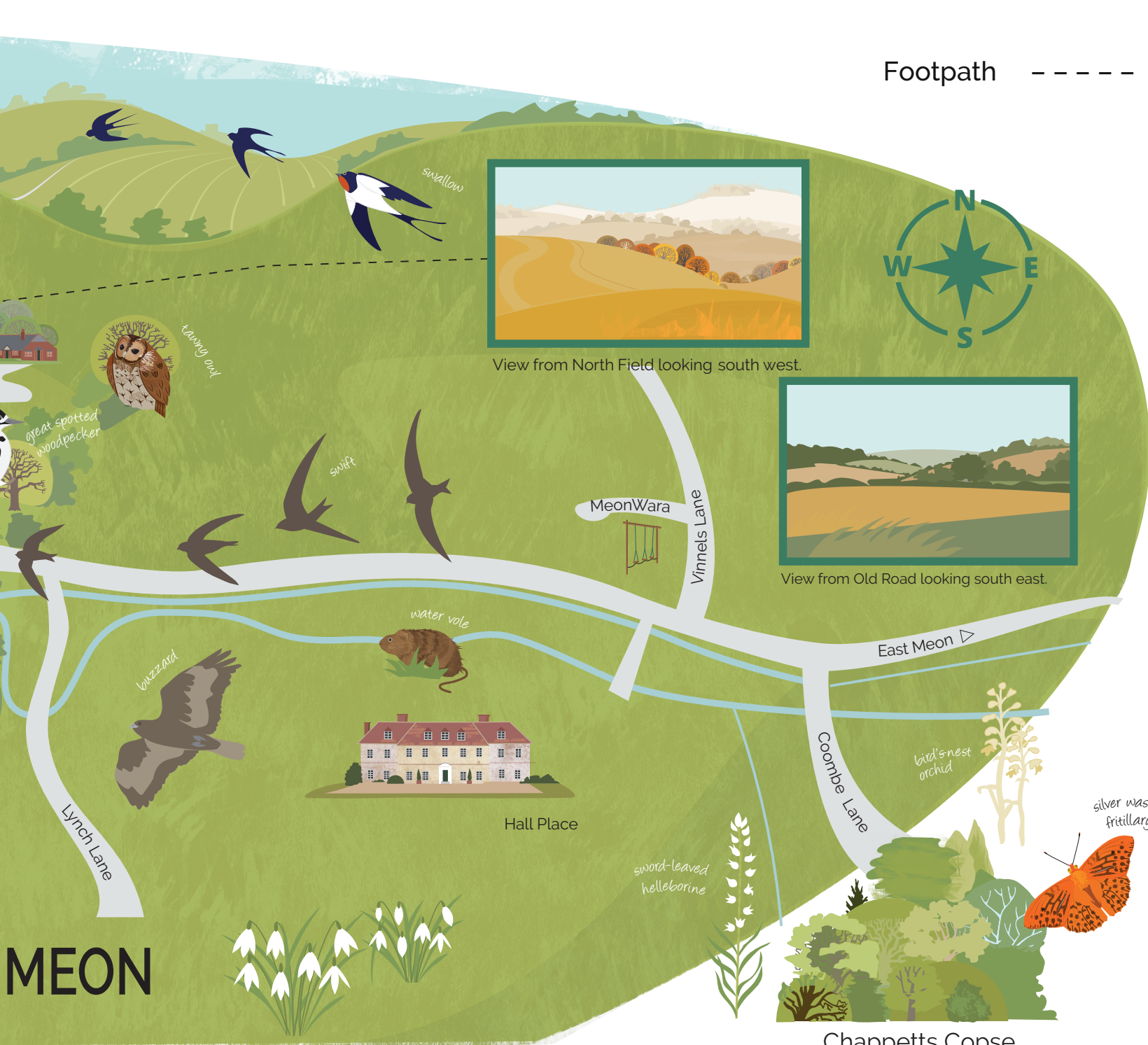
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WEST



Footpath - - - - -



View from North Field looking south west.



View from Old Road looking south east.



MEON

Chappetts Copse
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